

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 10, 2007

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Sharon Berry
Lindi Johnson
Nola McKinney
Irma Nelson

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Harold Brewer
Jim Hill
Ramona Sangalli
Buddy Spivey

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

AER Representative (Vacant)
Lori Hunter
James Johnson

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

AER Ex-officio (Vacant)

DHHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: Erica Gee

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Jim Hudson, Katy Morris, Coral Virden, Carolyn Holbrook, Jim Pearson, Donna Walker, Mary Cabaniss, Kandy Cayce, Chris McKenzie

CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Lindi Johnson called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA. One amendment was made to the agenda. The Client of the Year Committee Report will be moved to the June Agenda. The Board voted unanimously to approve the amendment to the agenda. Motion was made by Mrs. Nola McKinney to approve the agenda. Mrs. Sharon Berry seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.***

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF 12/09/06 MINUTES. Motion was made by Mrs. McKinney to approve the minutes. Mrs. Berry seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.***

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT –

DSB Director Mr. Jim Hudson welcomed former DSB Field Supervisor, Mrs. Kara Aaron to the board, in her new capacity as Ex-Officio Board Member. Mrs. Aaron recently transferred to the federal Veterans' Administration and has been selected to replace Mr. Buddy Spivey as the Blinded Veterans Association Representative on the DSB Board.

Mr. Hudson commended Mr. Spivey for his major contributions to the blind and the veterans of the State. Chairman Johnson presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Mr. Spivey for his leadership and dedication as an Ex-Officio member of the DSB board and predecessor boards from 1975 – 2006.

Mr. Hudson introduced Ms. Erica Gee, representative from the Arkansas Attorney General's Office. Ms. Gee will advise and represent DSB and the Board as necessary.

HIGHER EDUCATION AGREEMENTS – Mr. Hudson reported that DSB is making progress in securing the 33 mandatory agreements with public institutions of higher education concerning our mutual services to students who are blind or severely visually impaired. DSB is working in tandem with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services in getting the agreements completed and keeping RSA apprised. Hopefully we will have most of them signed by the next board meeting.

BUDGET – The President has recommended the elimination of the guaranteed cost-of-living increase tied to the Consumer Price Index which is historically applied to Rehab funding each year. This proposal has not passed Congress and we are hoping the consumer organizations are able to get that change removed from the budget bill. They have been working very hard on it.

WORKFORCE - There are still a lot of issues concerning Workforce Centers that we need to be dealing with...Improving Workforce Center capacity to serve consumers with disabilities, and ensuring that consumers are aware of what services are available to them at the Workforce Centers.

RANDOLPH-SHEPPARD PROGRAM – The Randolph-Sheppard Program provides preference to licensed blind vendors to run snack bars and hot food arrangements throughout all federal buildings. This priority is still under attack nationally. Senator Ted Kennedy and his staff indicated that they would like to see the Randolph-Sheppard program privileges extended to persons of all disabilities.

RSA TELECONFERENCE - DSB Staff, DHHS staff, DSB Board Chairman Lindi Johnson, and RSA Federal staff participated in an hour long teleconference regarding the upcoming Federal Section 107 Review scheduled in June of this year. The Central Office of RSA will send an eight member review team to DSB for five days in June to look at Finances, Randolph-Sheppard operations, Vocational Rehabilitation, Older Blind, Technology, etc. Two board members have been contacted by RSA and will participate in a teleconference March 19 to discuss the Section 107 review process. DSB staff is actively preparing for the Review and the visit from federal officials.

TRANSITION CONFERENCE – The Transition Conference was a tremendous success with over 300 participants. DSB served as a sponsor and several DSB staff participated in the conference.

PAY PLAN STUDY– The State of Arkansas, Department of Finance and Administration Pay Plan Study is still a problem. The resulting recommendations give little or no salary adjustments to direct service or other DSB staff, even though numerous market studies support such increases. For now the Study has been tabled by the legislature, but it could be brought up again at any time.

JUMP START – Jump Start is scheduled June 10, 2007 through June 29, 2007. The applications have been posted on the DSB Website and at each Secondary School statewide. Two applications have already been received. We look forward to working with Superintendent Jim Hill and the Arkansas School for the Blind staff, and particularly the Jump Start participants. We have watched many positive things happen to our Jump Start alumni over the years...developing skills, getting jobs and graduating from college.

STATE PLAN – Chief of Field Services Donna Walker and staff are already making preparations for development of the rehabilitation State Plan which is due to RSA July 1.

DSB BUDGET - So far DSB has not received any recommendation from Governor Beebe for the requested increase in general revenue for the Older Blind program, and it does not look too promising.

END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE REPORT – Mrs. Sharon Berry presented the report of the Needs Assessment Committee, consisting of Mrs. Berry and Ms. Irma Nelson. The full report is attached as a formal part of these minutes. The needs assessment forums will be conducted this spring no later than May 18 in all cities where DSB offices are located. Public Notice will be given in various media and through multiple groups to ensure as much participation as possible. The results of the needs assessment will be used by the board in setting the goals and priorities for the state plan due to RSA by July 1.

ELECTION OF ALL OFFICERS - Chairman Johnson called for nominations and reminded the board that the office of Chairman carried a two year term, while those of Vice-Chairman and Secretary each carried a one-year term. Ms. Irma Nelson nominated Mrs. Nola McKinney as Chairman. Mrs. Sharon Berry seconded the nomination. **Mrs. McKinney was elected unanimously.** Mrs. Nola McKinney nominated Mrs. Sharon Berry as Vice-Chairman. Ms. Irma Nelson seconded the nomination. **Mrs. Berry was elected unanimously.** Mrs. Nola McKinney nominated Ms. Irma Nelson as Secretary. Mrs. Sharon Berry seconded the nomination. **Ms. Nelson was elected unanimously.**

ANNUAL APPROVAL OF QUARTERLY BOARD TRAVEL RATES – In accordance with State law, boards must vote yearly to authorize reimbursement to their members for board meeting travel expenses and any other official travel. Mrs. Nola McKinney made the motion that DSB board members be reimbursed per state regulations for their costs incurred in attending the board meetings and national conferences. Mrs. Sharon Berry seconded the motion. **Motion Passed.**

SCHEDULE OF NEW BOARD ORIENTATION – Ms. Nelson will contact DSB Director Jim Hudson to schedule new board member orientation at her convenience.

DSB SPONSORSHIP OF BOARD TO NATIONAL NFB/ACB – The American Council of the Blind national convention is scheduled to be held at the Hyatt Regency and Millennium Hotels in Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 30-July 7, 2007. The National Federation of the Blind national convention is scheduled to be held at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia, June 30-July 6, 2007. Mrs. Sharon Berry moved that Mrs. McKinney be authorized to represent DSB at the American Council of the Blind convention and Ms. Lori Hunter be authorized to represent DSB at the National Federation of the Blind Convention, each to be reimbursed for actual and reasonable expenses in accordance with state procedures, not to exceed \$1,300 each. Ms. Irma Nelson seconded the motion. **Motion Passed.**

DISABILITY RIGHTS REPORT (DRC) – No representative was present. No report was submitted.

ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL REPORT (AILC) – No representative was present. A report was submitted with the board packet.

CONSUMER INPUT – The Arkansas School for the Blind will be sponsoring a Day Camp for babies. The Day Camp is primarily for the parents to bring their babies to the school for three days and have in-service on how to best prepare their child for entry into the public schools.

State ACB Convention. The Arkansas Council of the Blind will host its annual state convention at the Comfort Inn Hotel in downtown Little Rock, April 27-28, 2007. The guest speaker will be Ginger Beebe. Additional speakers scheduled include the ACB President from the board in Tennessee, Brenda Gillen, DSB Area Supervisor, Ms. Chris McKenzie and Senator Shane Broadway. Entertainment will be provided by Mr. Dwayne Hodges. DSB Board Members are encouraged to attend.

The LIONS will host a dinner dance at the Quapaw Center in Hot Springs, AR., March 23, 2007. Music will be provided by Mr. Dwayne Hodges. The dinner will also include a silent auction, dance contest, door prizes, etc. Tickets are available at \$20 per person.

State NFB Convention. The National Federation of the Blind of Arkansas (NFBA) state convention is scheduled this Fall. The National Federation of the Blind National Convention is sponsoring a march for independence, similar to a walkathon, July 3 or 4, 2007 at 6:00 a.m. Benefits from the walkathon will go towards programs for blind children and adults. A total of \$250 must be raised to be eligible to participate in the walk. Please contact Ms. Chris McKenzie if you wish to sponsor a walker.

State ACB is offering its Annual Scholarship. Applicants are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. One \$1,000 scholarship was given away last year.

The Arkansas School for the Blind has enrolled 54 toddlers for its Infant/Toddler program, from birth through 3 years of age. Most of the toddlers have visual problems and multiple disabilities.

SCHEDULE OF NEXT MEETING - The board voted unanimously to schedule the next board meeting Friday, June 15, 2007, at the Main Street Mall, 101 East Capitol, Third Floor, Arkansas River Room, Little Rock, AR at 10:00 a.m. (Enter the building from Main Street).

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Irma Nelson
Secretary